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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: JORDAN ELECTION MISCELLANY: END OF WEEK ONE

REF: AMMAN 2559-02

Classified By: DCM Gregory L. Berry for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

This cable provides a wrap-up of election-related stories in the run-up to Parliamentary elections on June 17.

TOUJAN FAISAL'S APPLICATION REJECTED

[11.](#) (U) At the end of the May 18-20 registration period, 821 candidates had registered nationwide for the 110 Lower House seats to be contested. In a move that surprised few, the Amman governor and the head of the elections committee rejected Toujan Faisal's application for participation in the Parliamentary elections (see reftel). The election law states that no candidate sentenced to more than a year in prison for a non-political crime is eligible to run. Faisal was sentenced by the court to serve one-and-a-half years in prison last year for non-political crime. Even though the King eventually pardoned her, her conviction still stands. In a public statement, Faisal admitted that she knew she would not be granted permission to run, but wanted to force the issue publicly. Faisal has appealed the decision and the court is expected to rule within three days.

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ACCUSED OF FAVORING CANDIDATES

[12.](#) (C) The Minister of Interior denied allegations on Jordan television (JTV) that his Ministry provided some candidates with constituency lists of their districts. The constituency list would allow the candidates to direct their efforts towards the heads or leaders of certain key families or tribes. In a three week campaign period, such lists would provide those candidates with an advantage over those who rely on door to door campaigning. Nuha Ma'a'ita, a candidate in the third district, raised the issue with Poloff on May [120](#). She told Poloff she did not receive a list, but claimed at least one candidate in her district had. She opined that since elections themselves would be much more transparent this year, the GOJ was stacking the deck before election day.

[13.](#) (U) Poloff has heard some anecdotal stories of the GOJ's tight control of the voter I.D. cards. One candidate reported that after the recent death of her father, she had to turn in his voter I.D. card before the government would issue a death certificate.

CANDIDATE PROFILES

[14.](#) (C) Poloff met with Rashed al-Breisha, a former member of parliament running in the first district of Amman. His major campaign slogan is "your brother, Attorney Rashed", and he estimates he needs 4,000 to 5,000 votes to win. The major issues concerning his constituents are unemployment, corruption, the recent increase in taxes and prices, temporary laws and the current cabinet. He believes the Islamic Action Front (IAF) party will win 18-21 seats in the next Parliament. Al-Breisha is the consummate politician and told Poloff, "if my constituents require that I attack my father, if that is what it takes to win, I will attack my father." To underscore the point, Rashed explained, he feels compelled to attack the Jordanian Government and the U.S. to compete with the IAF. He would have preferred holding elections around November to allow anti-government and anti-US sentiment to subside.

BANNERS: CAMPAIGNS FOCUSING ON LOCAL ISSUES

[15.](#) (SBU) In a May 22 drive around Amman covering the second, third, and fifth election districts, a snapshot of campaign banners--the main vehicle of campaign advertising--suggests that local issues, not regional issues are the focus of the campaign. Only one in roughly four banners alluded to Palestine, including "Jordan and Palestine are twins" and "Support the Intifada". Several banners focused on economic

issues or the need for better governance. Examples include: "Freedom, education, and democracy"; "No to nepotism"; and "No to bureaucracy, no to corruption." Some banners offered a more esoteric message such as: "Hand in hand, we will stay together."

16. (SBU) Poloffs saw only two banners attributed to IAF candidates, one with Koranic verses and the message that "Islam is the solution", and a second that called for "No occupation of Iraq"--the only Iraqi-related banner Poloffs saw. By the end of the first week of campaigning, Polfsn noted that the number of banners is far less than what was seen during the 1997 elections. Certain areas, such as downtown, which was a hub of election-related activity during the 1997 elections, had very few banners.

17. (U) JTV on May 21 began a program to allow candidates to meet with some of their constituents to discuss elections issues. The program allows candidates to introduce themselves, present their ideas, and answer questions directly from constituents. So far, the program has covered Aqaba and Ma'an.

GNEHM